



Mentor to Help Officials Survive

Mentoring new officials is becoming increasingly popular in athletics, as it helps in reducing turnover, promoting growth, and overall helps officials adjust to the new demands and requirements to become a prepared and effective sports official. We have learned from research that over 80 percent of the first-time officials see mentoring as crucial to their success in the sport(s) that they work. This comes as no surprise as mentoring has helped us as we have gone through challenging life transitions, including dealing with stressful changes at home or transitioning to a new job.

In order to achieve the success that we desire as an association, it is imperative that we mentor new officials. When examining companies and how they became remarkably successful, one trait which stands above many others: successful companies have excellent leaders, and with excellent leaders come excellent employees. Leadership and guidance is very important to success in nearly every field, and sports official mentoring is one way to provide personalized leadership for both young and seasoned officials. Skills-based mentoring is part of onboarding to teach new officials the ropes and to help them excel and grow as they continue their involvement with the sport. So what are the identifiable benefits of a mentoring program in your association?

1. Education and Learning

Educated, well-trained officials produce better results than officials who lack knowledge and training. Nearly 80 percent of all learning is informal, not done by reading or taking classes, but rather by learning on the job and from others. By introducing mentoring programs, associations can ensure that their officials are able to complete their assignments with knowledge of the rules and their position. Mentors will elevate and escalate "knowledge transfer," meaning that associations

can have highly productive officials in a much shorter period than they would have had mentors not been implemented.

2. Reducing Turnover Rates

One of the main benefits of mentoring programs is that mentors can play a major role in reducing the turnover of officials, meaning that the association will not have to invest in training new officials as often as they would with a higher turnover. By providing personalized advice to a mentee, a mentor can help to ensure that officials will work through any frustrations or concerns they may have, help them build the skills they need for success, encouraging them to stay with officiating and grow there for a longer period of time.

3. Time Savings and Focus

Implementing mentorship strategies is an excellent way to save time. By implementing mentors, officials with questions or concerns can often work with the mentor on a resolution or answer, reducing the time needed to get wait for an answer from the MHSAA or the NFHS, which overall improves productivity. Mentors also reduce the formal training necessary for new officials; by providing new employees with a 'project-based' mentor, they can learn on the job, rather than on-line or in a training room.

Mentoring is an important component of an association's program and involves other elements, such as tutoring or life skills training and coaching. The supportive, healthy relationships formed between mentors and mentees are both immediate and long-term and contribute to a host of benefits for mentors and mentees.

A successful mentor-mentee program will grow the ranks of officials and provide a legacy that will have a tremendous impact for years to come. In the sports officiating arena.

Something to Consider: "Never discourage anyone who continually make progress, no matter how slow".

Tip for the Week: "...any coach of the contestant or the contestant has the prerogative to default a match to the opponent at any time prior to the conclusion of wrestling by informing the referee". Rule 6.4.4

